



# arts•gram

A Daily  
Publication of the  
National Veterans  
Creative Arts  
Festival

for Wednesday, October 18, 2000

## “Stephanie’s Hope” Takes on a Whole New Meaning

Few of the stories behind the winning artwork showcased at this week’s National Veterans Creative Arts Festival are as moving as the one behind the first-place winner in the bead work category.

When Joni Whiting began working on the Victorian-designed beaded necklace, her daughter Stephanie told her how pretty she thought the necklace was, and that she’d like to wear it in her wedding. Whiting was pleased, but surprised to hear her daughter mention marriage. At the time, Stephanie was pregnant with her third child by a man she’d been with for eight years but had never expressed interest in marrying.

Whiting promised her daughter that if she finished the piece, Stephanie could wear it in her wedding. Whiting did finish the piece, and her therapist at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Katy Ryan, entered it in the national art competition.

Ryan also helped Whiting come up with a name for the piece, “Stephanie’s Hope,” to symbolize Whiting’s hope that her daughter would get married and wear the necklace. Several months after first mentioning the possibility of a wedding, Stephanie announced that she was getting married, and mother

and daughter excitedly began making wedding plans.

Meanwhile, Whiting became concerned about a large mole on Stephanie’s face, and urged her daughter to get it checked by a doctor. Stephanie finally agreed, but the doctor didn’t want to remove the growing mole until after her baby was born.

When the mole was analyzed, Stephanie got some shocking news—she was diagnosed with stage-three melanoma, and the cancer had moved into her lymph nodes. Surgery and chemotherapy were recommended to treat her aggressive form of cancer, and a hasty ceremony was arranged with a justice of the peace to unite Stephanie and her fiancé. The bride, groom and witnesses all wore jeans. Three weeks later, though, she was finally able to wear her dress and the necklace in a more traditional wedding ceremony.

Stephanie is now undergoing chemotherapy, and her mother says the name of the award-winning necklace has taken on a whole other meaning. Whiting, a disabled Navy veteran from Jordan, Minn., says her daughter is her “right arm.”

“Her form of cancer only has a 16 percent survival rate, and I need it to be higher,” Whiting says. “I can’t afford

to lose her.” Whiting says that even though she didn’t want to leave her daughter while she is undergoing her cancer treatment, Stephanie insisted that her mother go through with her plans to attend the Festival.

This is Whiting’s fourth Creative Arts Festival. Winning entries in the bead work category got her to her first two festivals, and a wire-wrapped jewelry piece won her the opportunity to participate in her third Festival.

She learned beading at the age of 14 from a Native American boy who taught her the technique used by his grandmother. “I attribute my love of beading to him,” Whiting says.

She didn’t create any bead works for years, but got back into it after her disabilities left her with a lot of time on her hands. She has a particular interest in Victorian pieces, and says that participating in the Festival rejuvenates her. “It gives me the strength to reach inside myself and create something.”

When she returns home, her focus will be on the daughter who inspired her award-winning creation. For Whiting, the name of her necklace now symbolizes her hope that her daughter will ultimately win the battle of her life.

## Today's Workshops

### Human Face in Caricature by David Carter

This workshop will demonstrate how to draw a typical face as well as different faces, and examine ways of distorting them truthfully.

When: 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Where: Ballrooms A & B

### Tai Chi by Shabaka J-EI

This workshop will introduce participants to a traditional yang style tai chi form for health, relaxation and self-defense. Participants will be able to experience the principles of movement, relaxation and balance and learn tai chi self-defense techniques.

When: 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Where: Ballrooms A & B

### Vietnam Commemorative Presentation by Katy Ryan

This program will feature a slide show presentation of the arts entries in the Vietnam category of the art division in this year's National Veterans Creative Arts competition.

When: 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Where: Martin Room

## The Story Behind the Art



### Embraced

Brian Bemis

There's a great story behind every piece of art featured at the Festival this week. And the artist interaction is where art winners get the chance to explain the inspiration behind their creativity, as well as the technical aspects of how they created their award-winning works.

In Brian Bemis's case, creating his gold medal-winning color drawing was part of his recovery from the heart surgery

By Fran Heimrich, VA Central Office

he had in 1992. Entitled "Embraced," the painting is a three-dimensional abstract done primarily in red.

During Monday's artist interaction at the Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center, Bemis, an Army veteran from Milwaukee, explained how he sets the mood of his paintings by building tension between the background and the objects in the center and by varying the intensity of the pencil strokes and lighting used throughout the work.

He said he likes to create a world that he and viewers can step into. "I like to evoke a mood," said Bemis. "I like to paint at night. I start at 9:00 p.m. and paint until 12:00 a.m. I never thought my first work would be here today."

Bemis starts by penciling in the center objects. Most look like mini sculptures floating in space. He selects a background color, and varies the hue and intensity.

In this work, light emanates from the center and bounces off the figures, drawing the viewer into another dimension or realm. Bemis said he achieves this effect by rubbing or buffing areas to soften the hue. When finished, he sprays the work with an acrylic sealer to bring back the intensity of the color.

The winning entry could have been Bemis's journey through his own heart following surgery. If you could remove the sculptured pieces you would see a maze that could represent a vascular structure.

Today, Bemis credits his recovery to his love of painting. Like any struggling artist, he is looking for ways to frame his works and a gallery to display them. He frames his work in modest frames that will not detract from his work.

## Creative Quotes

"Singing is very therapeutic for me and gives me a feeling of good cheer. If you think you're sounding your best, you will always have a positive feeling about yourself. You kind of know you're doing good if you are applauded by your audience. It tells you to try and be ready for a break in life. You can be the best you can be with training. And, it's one of the most positive feelings in the world to display your talents and please people in the process."

George Staly, San Antonio, TX

"I like music, and it's been very inspirational for me to be able to write my own songs. Sometimes, I even surprise myself with what I write about. It has been very exciting to have my song adapted and used annually by the Festival over the past three years, and I'm very honored to have been invited here to Washington to perform it on stage again."

John Kanoho, Hawaii National Park, HI

# NOSEY NOTES

by  
**Spilzie Beans**



Our spies tell us that by week's end we will wish that Wayne Holland's (Hesperia, CA) beautiful ceramic tasty-looking turkey is real! Enough with the pasta and Mexican food! If we continue with the rice and beans we'll all be two stepping to the rest rooms and there will be no need for an orchestra. Spilzie is getting a little tired of being self-propelled. Not to mention that we could kill a whole herd of turtles with our taco breath! Somebody please bring on the turkey! Oh, and by the way, we hear it's Wayne's birthday on Saturday. Party on...

Suzanne Anderson, Festival Dance Chairperson, didn't do all that bootie knitting at last year's Festival for nothing. She shook her bootie all the way to the hospital seven months ago and delivered a beautiful 9 lb. 2 oz. bouncing baby boy, Christopher Leo. Want to see pictures? Just ask her!

Seems like the American Legion Auxiliary members sponsoring the Hospitality Room are on everyone's "most favorite" list...what a

wonderful expression of dedication to the veterans attending this year's Festival. Spilzie hears that not only is the food great but the company is oh so nice – they guarantee it! Don't forget to say thanks to them as you wander through the Room.

Talk about close encounters! One of our own, Jim Takacs of Sepulveda, CA, had a brush with fame (and I don't mean a paintbrush)! It all happened when Jim was taking photos of State Capitals some twenty years ago. Seems that President Clinton (then the Governor of Arkansas), was struggling to climb the stairs of the State Capitol in Little Rock on crutches when Jim and an aide came to his rescue. Unfortunately, Jim didn't know that the young long haired man he was helping was actually the Governor. When they entered the reception area, Jim was shocked when everyone stood up. In 1992, when Clinton was running for President, Jim wrote him a letter recalling the event. Clinton wrote back telling him that he did indeed remember his encounter with the startled photographer.

Thats all for now!

## Things to Know

### White House Tour

Buses for the White House tour will depart today at 8:30 a.m. from the front of the hotel. It's important to be on time, and don't forget to bring a photo I.D. Cameras are allowed at the White House in designated areas, but security is tight, so please do not bring any unnecessary items.

### Festival Web Site

For the first year in its history, the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival has its own Web site. At <http://www.va.gov/vetevent/caf>, you'll find an electronic art gallery showcasing all of the winning artwork, each day's edition of Arts Gram, and a photo gallery showing participants in rehearsals, workshops and other activities during the week. Check it out!



### Departure Information

Please stop by the Host Room as soon as possible to give your departure flight times and the airport you will be leaving from to Joe or Clarence in Transportation.

# National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Schedule for Wednesday, October 18

Performer's Schedule		Artist's Schedule
	6am	
Breakfast at hotel <b>6:30-8am</b>	7	<b>6:30-8am</b> Breakfast at hotel
	8	
Team leader meetings <b>8am</b>		<b>8am</b> Team ldrs meet w/ national art chairperson
Team leaders meet with participants <b>8:15am</b>	9	<b>8:15am</b> Team leaders meet with participants
<b>8:30-11:30am</b> White House Tour	10	<b>8:30-11:30am</b> White House Tour
	11	
	Noon	
<b>11:30am-1:30pm</b> HHV's 30th Anniversary Kick-off Luncheon	1pm	<b>11:30am-1:30pm</b> HHV's 30th Anniversary Kick-off Luncheon
	2	
<b>1:30-5pm</b> Individual acts continue rehearsals.	3	<b>2-4pm</b> Caricature drawing workshop (All teams) Ballrooms A & B
	4	
	5	
<b>5:30-6:45pm</b> Dinner at hotel	6	<b>5:30-6:45pm</b> Dinner at hotel
	7	
<b>7-9:30pm</b> Rehearsal with orchestra at hotel - all performers	8	<b>7-8:30pm</b> Slide presentation at hotel of the entries in the Vietnam category of the 2000 National Veterans Creative Arts competition in Martin Room
	9	
<b>9:30-11pm</b> Social time at hotel, Karaoke, Ballroom A & B	10	<b>9-11pm</b> Social time at hotel, Karaoke, Ballroom A & B
	11	

## Announcements

### Parking

If you are parking at the hotel, please park on the lower levels of the garage. The upper levels are reserved for vans and buses.

### Lost and Found

Lose (or find) something? Lost and Found is located in the Host Room.

### Medical & Hospitality Suites

The Hospitality Suite is located on the 4th floor, Suite 442.  
The Medical Suite is located on the 2nd floor in Suite 242.



### BREAKFAST

Assorted Chilled Fruit Juices  
Country Styled Scrambled Eggs  
(ham, onion, and green pepper)  
Bacon and Sausage  
Home Fried Potatoes  
Assorted Cold Cereals

### LUNCH

Mixed Green Salad  
Vegetable Lasagna  
Meatloaf  
Garlic Mashed Potatoes  
Green Beans Almondine  
Homemade Chocolate Bread  
Pudding

### DINNER

Salad Bar with appropriate  
accompaniments  
Fresh Fruit Bowl  
Catch of the Day in Lemon Basil Sauce  
Chicken Alexandria  
with Apple Pecan Stuffing  
Potatoes Terrine  
Medley of Fresh Vegetables  
Assorted Pies and Cakes  
Rolls and Butter